

Doing It Well: Education To Promote Satisfaction With Sexual Intimacy For People With Spinal Cord Injury

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OBJECTIVES OF PRESENTATION:

1. Describe the impact of spinal cord injury (SCI) on sexual function and participation in sexual intimacy
2. Explain occupational therapy's role in promoting participation in sexual intimacy for adults with SCI
3. Discuss the available evidence regarding the use of patient education to promote participation in sexual intimacy

CLINICAL QUESTION:

What is the efficacy of patient education in order to promote satisfaction with participation in sexual intimacy for adults with spinal cord injury?

METHODS:

- Databases searched:
 - CINAHL, MEDLINE, PubMed, OTSearch
- Search Terms
 - *Population:* spinal cord injury, SCI, tetrapleg\$, parapleg\$, quadrapleg, spinal cord injur\$
 - *Intervention:* patient education, partner education, counseling, educational materials, PLISSIT, sexual rehabilitation, occupational therapy
 - *Outcome:* satisfaction AND sex, satisf\$ AND sex, intimacy, sex\$, sex\$ AND intimacy, intima\$, sexual behavior, satisf\$ AND relationship\$

CRITIQUE METHOD

- 17 articles included in final review
 - Two person rating technique (primary and secondary reviewer)
 - Law & MacDermid (2008) quantitative and qualitative critique forms

RESULTS: SYNTHESIZED THEMES

Satisfaction with sexual intimacy (pre-post injury) ¹⁻⁶

- There is a decline in satisfaction with engagement in sexual intimacy following SCI, indicating an occupational performance deficit

Experience with sexual education ¹⁻¹²

- Patients report insufficient information pertaining to sexuality following SCI, indicating a need for improvements in patient education interventions

Unmet needs of women ^{1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, 13}

- Women with SCI represent an underserved population in literature and in the clinic with regard to sexual education

Sex education recommendations ¹⁻¹⁷

- Patient education on sexuality post-SCI should be holistic, client-centered, multi-modal, and provided throughout the lifespan by an interdisciplinary team

IMPLICATIONS FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

- More research from the field of occupational therapy
- Occupational therapists need to conduct more research on sexuality interventions in order to promote evidence-based practice and develop confidence in providing treatment
- Solidify our role in sexual rehabilitation and establish ourselves as leaders on the interdisciplinary team
- Occupational therapists have a major role in the total rehabilitation process and are best suited to be leaders directing sexual education due to increased contact and close therapeutic relationships with patients
- Sexual education interventions should focus on “doing” as opposed to talking-based or written format interventions
 - Examples: dressing/undressing, transfers, community mobility, positioning, bowel/bladder management, role play

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